

Testimony Submitted To the House Education Committee Meeting of February 28, 2006

House Education Committee Members,

Thank you, for including social studies in the proposed high school graduation requirements. I have a few suggestions, for the legislation, though.

First, I've heard support for applicable middle school classes fulfilling high school graduation requirements articulated by both State Superintendent Flanagan and Senate Education Committee Chair, Wayne Kuipers. However, two bills currently introduced (i.e. Senate Bill 1021 and House Bill 5636) specifically forbid this. And, while Substitute Bill 5606, H-3 deleted the original bill's prohibition on the option of credit-substitution, H-3 contains no language specifically offering the option to districts. I urge you to change this; its inclusion has many advantages.

One, if the substitution option were offered, it is likely that capable students would take the more rigorous option of, say, algebra or another language, at the middle school level: Doing so would allow them more elective choices at the high school level. These electives, of course, might even be in math or a language, so the student would be progressing farther than he or she ordinarily would.

Two, this option would also strengthen middle school curricula. Under currently proposed bills, students have no incentive to take math or a language early. In fact, if students aren't inclined to take higher math, they would find it *disadvantageous* to begin its study at the middle school level: If they took algebra in middle school, *they would still have to take four levels of math at the high school level*; so, the student disinclined toward math would most likely not take middle school algebra. In fact, in recent testimony before the House Education Committee, Dr. Sharif Shakrani, from Michigan State University's School of Education, said that his studies showed that a majority of students who took middle school algebra for high school graduation credit went on to take four years of math in high school because, he said, they gained confidence with higher math concepts. Of course, even if inclined or disinclined students did poorly in, say, Algebra I, in eighth grade, there would be more opportunity for remediation, if they attempted the class in middle school yet found themselves in need of further instruction.

Finally, in being a social studies teacher, I must urge those now favoring HB 5606, H-3's passage to alter its language to better align with the *Michigan Curriculum Framework*. As you know, Public Act 335 (1994) placed social studies within the *Framework*. However, HB 5606, both in its original and substitute form, presently conflicts with the *Framework*. Specifically, HB 5606's chronology for the prescribed United States History class is the Colonial Era to the present. Conversely, the Historical Perspective strand of the *Framework* (content standards 1-4) states that high school US History classes should cover the period after Reconstruction. Hence, please review HB 5606 and alter its language to abide by already established law and policy, the *Michigan Curriculum Framework*.

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